

Wyland's whale won't be on Calif. license plates

By Tony Barboza, Los Angeles Times

For years, a painting of a whale's tail splashing out of the gray, misty ocean has been one of the most popular license plates in California. Nearly 200,000 have been sold, raising millions for coastal and environmental conservation programs.



But the artwork by Wyland was deep-sixed after the Laguna Beach muralist's request for 20 percent of the state's profits from the plates to fund his environmental foundation was rebuffed. Wyland also has a gallery in South Lake Tahoe.

Rather than tangle with the artist over the rights to the painting, titled "Tails of Great Whales," the state decided to retire the plate instead and hold a contest to replace it.

The new plate to debut Aug. 2 is a crisper, brighter rendering of a whale's tail that California Coastal Commission officials say more closely resembles an actual whale – a humpback – than Wyland's more dreamy design.

Tens of thousands of the whale-tail plates can be spotted on California roads, according to the state Department of Motor Vehicles. They are some of the most sought-after of the state's 10 specialty plates, which include depictions of such state treasures as Lake Tahoe and Yosemite. Since the plates were introduced in 1997, sales and renewals have raised more than \$60 million for coastal and environmental conservation programs.

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